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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Other poets of similar inspiration are Ph. Soupault, Louis Aragon, André Breton, Raymond Radiguet, Gabrielle Buffet, J. Perez Jorba, Pierre Albert Birot, Paul Dermée and Céline, Arnould. I know nothing of them beyond their works. It is noticeable that the style of these ladies and gentlemen, so obscure in their poetry, is comparatively limpid in their advertisements; their names are also easy to read.

Americans, who believe with me that literature is something more than a series of little jokes, "leg-pullings," "astonishing the grocers," and so on, must forgive me for throwing the ultimate responsibility for this "new art" upon America. Perhaps Italy, with Marinetti, should bear some of the blame, but *Tender Buttons* and America are the real parents.

Richard Aldington

REVIEWS

CAMOUFLAGE

Reynard the Fox, or the Ghost Heath Run, by John Masefield. Macmillan Co.

Enslaved, by John Masefield. Macmillan Co.

John Masefield is almost too good to be true, too divinely simple and child-like. Here are his two latest books, one a superior nursery-rhyme for growing-up and adult boys and girls; and the other mostly romantic tales creaking with all the old machinery—the first long narrative, *Enslaved*, giving us actually a lovely lady abducted by pirates, followed by her voluntary-slave lover, rescued by him from the Khalif's

own harem, and finally freed from sentence of death by the noble autocrat when he hears of the heroic adventure!

The super-naïveté of a mind which can indulge in such romantic and acrobatic stunts in sober middle-life, is a faculty upon which we must congratulate the poet and the world. *Reynard the Fox* is a rattling good story, which is like to replace *Hiawatha* and *The Lady of the Lake* in school catalogues, and carry on for several more generations the grand old English tradition of fox-hunting. The poet's hero, the fox, is more vividly alive, perhaps, than any man or woman in all his books; but the various human types, not to mention the horses and hounds, are sketched in with a lively sympathy—the country squire and his wild-riding sons and daughters, the groom and huntsman, the vicar and the lordling, all those familiar figures of English country-gentleman life who still follow the hounds exactly as their ancestors did half a thousand years ago, in spite of inconvenient modern obstacles. Here, for example, is an equestrian portrait almost worthy of Chaucer himself:

A pommle cob came trotting up
Round-bellied like a drinking-cup,
Bearing on back a pommle man
Round-bellied like a drinking-can—
The clergyman from Condicote.
His face was scarlet from his trot,
His white hair bobbed about his head
As halos do 'round clergy dead.
He asked Tom Copp, "How long to wait?"
His loose mouth opened like a gate
To pass the wagons of his speech.
He had a mighty voice to preach,
Though indolent in other matters.
He let his children go in tatters.

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And here is Reynard, pictured at the moment of swiftest chase, when "his game heart gulped and he put on steam"—and escaped:

Like a rocket shot to a ship ashore
The lean red bolt of his body tore;
Like a ripple of wind running swift on grass,
Like a shadow on wheat when a cloud blows past;
Like a turn at the buoy in a cutter sailing
When the bright green gleam lips white at the railing;
Like the April snake whipping back to sheath,
Like the gannet's hurtle on fish beneath;
Like a kestrel chasing, like a sickle reaping,
Like all things swooping, like all things sweeping;
Like a hound for stay, like a stag for swift,
With his shadow beside like spinning drift.

Enslaved, I confess, is too much for me. Byron, writing *The Corsair*, knew what he was doing—he was "writing for women," as he put it bluntly in asserting that his memoirs—destroyed, alas, by those two false-friend snobs, Moore and Murray—were written for men. But whom is Mr. Masfield writing for—in this post-war period when even fine ladies are wearing short skirts and sitting in Parliament? Pirates and khalifs are as much out of fashion as the smooth, rhyme-bounded, line-cut iambics in which the tale is told "all early in the April." And this be-furbeled balderdash is by the author of *Gallipoli*, by a man who lived and suffered through the Great War, and wrote one of the most mournful and beautiful poems in the war anthologies!

We have in Mr. Masfield a curious example of a man who cheats his mind—feeds it sugar-plums and sleeping-draughts. He is not, of course, a profound or original thinker; but his meditative poems, in *Good Friday* and

Camouflage

Lollingdon Downs, are the earnest inquiry of a typical modern mind into the meaning of life; one whom science has deprived of its orthodox God, and its faith in personal immortality. This is the feeling expressed once more in the finest and sincerest poem of this latest volume, *The Passing Strange*, of which we quote the closing stanzas:

So, in this water mixed with dust,
The byre-cock spirit crows, from trust
That death will change because it must.

For all things change—the darkness changes,
The wandering spirits change their ranges,
The corn is gathered to the granges.

The corn is sown again, it grows.
The stars burn out, the darkness goes.
The rhythms change, they do not close.

They change; and we, who pass like foam,
Like dust blown through the streets of Rome,
Change ever, too; we have no home,

Only a beauty, only a power,
Sad in the fruit, bright in the flower,
Endlessly erring for its hour,

But gathering, as we stray, a sense
Of Life, so lovely and intense
It lingers when we wander hence,

That those who follow feel behind
Their backs, when all before is blind,
Our joy, a rampart to the mind.

Yet we find him, in another poem, offering the sedative:

And now, perhaps, the memory of their hate
Has passed from them and they are friends again,
Laughing at all the troubles of this state
Where men and women work each other pain.

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Indeed, he is constantly slipping out of his own richly romantic epoch, blown by all the eager winds of change, and evading its beauty and terror. He escapes not only by excursions into pirate-haunted seas and fox-hunted downs, but by feeling and presenting modern life as melodrama—in such narratives as *The Widow in the Bye Street* and *The Everlasting Mercy*—instead of searching it as truth. He lulls his soul with out-worn orthodoxies and conventions, just as he dulls his art with *clichés*; and then excuses himself with the plea of aging energies, as in these few lines of the poem, *On Growing Old*:

Be with me, Beauty, for the fire is dying.
My dog and I are old, too old for roving.
Man, whose young passion sets the spindrift flying,
Is soon too lame to march, too cold for loving.

Only stay quiet while my mind remembers
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers.

It's too early for that kind of talk, Mr. Masfield. It is mere self-indulgence, sleepiness of the spirit. In the fifties a poet should not be too old for either roving or loving, certainly not for thinking.

H. M.

FLINT AND RODKER

Otherworld, by F. S. Flint. Poetry Bookshop, London.

Hymns, by John Rodker. The Ovid Press, London.

If I cannot say that these two poets have genius, if I am unable to persuade myself of their immortality, I can at least declare that I find the art of Mr. Flint infinitely